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ABSTRACT

The inability of the emotionally handicapped youngster to respond appropriately to sense stimuli is shown by cluttered, inaccurate, or aggravated reactions. For him, school is full of frustrations and failures. He must be provided with relevant motivational and pleasurable learning activities to interest him long enough for teaching to take place. Activities should emphasize extending the quality of observation and the increased development of sensory awareness through directed use of the 5 senses. The out-of-doors can be used as a laboratory for increasing sensory sensitivity while the classroom can be a place for orientation, teaching, and evaluation. Some language arts activities for the out-of-doors and the classroom are listed in this paper. Activities overlap from one area to another. (NQ)

RELATING OUTDOOR EDUCATION CONCEPTS TO TEACHERS OF EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND YOUTH - LONG ISLAND AREA - MARCH 10, 1973.

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MULTI-SENSORY LANGUAGE ARTS DEVELOPMENT:

The emotionally handicapped youngster resembles the multi-sensory disabled child in demonstrating an inability to respond appropriately to sense stimuli. He is too disoriented to take the time to observe properly. His auditory response to noise is out of proportion to the actual sounds presented. He is generally uncomfortable and confused in unconfined areas. Similarly, his reaction to other sense stimuli is cluttered, inaccurate, or aggravated.

School for such a youngster is fraught with frustration and failure. His teachers must provide acceptable relevant motivational devices or pleasurable learning activities to interest him long enough for remediation and teaching to take place. The world beyond the classroom, when properly utilized, affords a veritable treasure chest of material to call upon. Starting with areas of the school yard with which they are comfortable, the e.h. youngsters can explore gradually increasing environs. The emphasis should be on extending the quality of observation, the increased development of appropriate sensory awareness through directed use of each of the five senses in isolation or combination.

The emotionally handicapped youngster can learn to be secure out-of-doors. Sights, sounds, and feelings from nature can help to extend and enrich his limited horizons. Within the classroom, a program in language arts-reading and writing and all their concomitant skills - will help the youngster integrate and communicate his developing awareness. Thus the environment beyond the classroom constitutes the laboratory for increasing sensory sensitivity, while the classroom remains, for the most part, the area for orientation, teaching, and evaluation to take place.

In the following pages I have listed some language arts activities to be conducted beyond and within classroom walls. The variety of such experiences is limitless, depending only on the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the teacher. As you will notice, activities overlap from one area to another:

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I. Outside the Classroom

A. Reading and Writing

1. Follow a nature trail, reading the signs. (Make your own class trail, doing your own sign).

2. Visit an old cemetery. Read the epitaphs, names, and dates.

3. Have a treasure hunt. Give each group of 3 or 4 children printed directions from the school to their treasure. Have them take crayons, pencil and paper. One of the children will draw the treasure, one will label it, one will write and one will tell about it.

"Go out the cafeteria exit. Walk down the path to the little playground. Turn right and walk along the edge near the trees. Stop at the tallest tree and look around at the bottom. What do you find that does not belong there? (possibly a shell, a piece of driftwood, starfish, etc.-something not indigenous to the area.)

4. Have an outdoor poetry reading session.

5. Read and make maps or charts of walks and trips.

6. Gather nuts, seeds, twigs, moss, pine cones, acorns, seed pods and similar objects to develop the sense of touch and smell. List the objects and write a word or words to tell how they feel and/or smell. (Follow up by making collage of objects.)

B. Listening, observing, perceiving

1. Stop and listen. Close your eyes, make a fist, and count the different sounds you hear by extending a finger for each.

2. During a class walk ask the children "to take a picture". Have them make a box with their fingers, or look through a cardboard tube, and find the scene they like. Let them focus on this small area to remember its arrangement. Have them sit down and sketch the picture or draw it from memory back in the

classroom.

3. Take a tape recorder along on a trip. Sit very quietly for two minutes, then turn it on and record the sounds.
4. Children sit in a circle. One starts the game by saying "From where I am I can see a gray birch". The next one says, "From where I stand I can see a gray birch and a black cherry." Each player repeats all the previous statements in exactly the same order and adds another true statement. (He may be challenged and if unable to defend his statement, he drops out).
5. List the sounds you hear, or the smells around you. Distinguish between man-made and natural sounds and smells. Describe them.

C. Spelling, Phonics, Vocabulary Enrichment

1. Look around for all the things you can find beginning with "B" (or any other consonant). Make a chart for the room.
2. Riddles - "I am thinking of a tree (or bird) that begins with "M", etc.
3. Spelling Bee

Divide children into teams. Use flowers, insects, or trees. Hold up a flower; the first in line names it and spells the name or gives an interesting fact about it. If he fails he drops out. The team with the most children left, wins.

4. Nature Alphabet

Played with teams. The leader selects a letter of the alphabet. Each player names a bird, flower, or tree which begins with that letter. (Decide on a time limit.) No one may name an object already designated. The team having the greatest number of players left at the end of the game is the winner, or the last group to name an object commencing with the letter wins one point for his team.

5. Sound Location

A youngster is chosen to be "it" - a good woodsman, The other students stand behind his back, no closer than 10 feet. A leader points to someone who then whistles, "It" must name the whistler, who then becomes "it" in turn. Out of doors the sound may also be the rustling of leaves, jumping in sand, snapping a twig, dropping a stone, etc.

II. Within the Classroom: Written and Oral Expression

A. Written Expression

1. A walk to a quiet spot, a few minutes observation and meditation, can provide the inspiration for creative writing.

a. Haiku - 3 line, unrhymed composition of 5-7-5 syllables.

Line I 5 syllables - where?
Line II 7 " - what?
Line III 5 " - when?

On a gnarled limb
A crow above is cawing
Autumn stillness now

In the evening sky
The clouds seem so very gay
When kites are flying

Crow, with shiny clothes
As black as a moonless night
I am of your race.

The street is empty
The children have gone in doors
A storm is coming.

Creative - and great practice in syllabication.

b. Cinquain -

5 lines, unrhymed

Line 1 - 1 word - Name it - noun
" 2 - 2 describing words-adjectives
" 3 - 3 action words - verbs
" 4 - 4 words telling what it means
sentence or phrasing to your
synonym
" 5 - 1 word - rename it

Flower,
White, free
Blooms floats, attracts
A beauty to see
Lily,

Amphibian
Green, smooth
Sets, squats, crows
A creature for laughter
Frog.

Deer
Sleek, graceful
Running, leaping, fleeing
Happy to be free
Buck

2. Write an experience chart about a nature hike, or a log of a day's field trip.
3. Make a list of adjectives, e.g. rough, smooth, sharp. Find or name objects and categorize them appropriately.
4. Write a description of a snow, rain, or wind storm.
5. Scramble names and facts using material from nature.
6. Make up crossword puzzles from vocabulary learned out-of-doors.

B. Oral

1. Give directions for a nature hike or field trip.
2. Collect interesting objects. Each child tells about the object-reasons for his choice or facts he has researched.
3. Prepare and participate in an original out-of-doors drama.
4. Pretend you are an alien space creature landing on our planet. Describe what you see, using a new vocabulary. (You can't use the name of the object.)
5. Give directions for a game out-of-doors and lead the game.
6. Using "personification" - the granting of human characteristics to a non-human object - have the plant or animal tell a story about itself.

"I'm tired of four walls and a ceiling,
I have need of the grass".

Richard Harvey